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MAHAYANA P. HALL

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The Noble Eightfold Path

Palmer
By MANLY P. HALL

*Ye dharma hetuprabhava
Hetun teshan tathagato
Hyavadata teshan ca yo nirodha
Evamvadi mahasramanah*

FOURTH EDITION

PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY
3341 GRIFFITH PARK BLVD., LOS ANGELES,
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TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

PART ONE

BUDDHA, THE FRIEND OF MAN

There is no character more beautiful among all the servants of the human race than that of the Lord Sakya Muni, who has justly earned the title of "The Light of Asia." It is fitting that all nations and all races should be taught to respect those unselfish and compassionate ones who have renounced all that life held dear and have gone forth to champion the cause of their fellow creatures before the footstool of Divinity.

The Christian world, divided by so many barriers both religious and racial, often overlooks the philosophical doctrines of the Far East. It does not realize that great minds do not belong to nations, but rather to the human race as a whole. From the inscrutable and unknown East shines forth a light which has solved the spiritual problems of hundreds of millions of living beings. We cannot afford to ignore this great light.

The Buddhist faith is the largest the world has ever known, and at one time it is said that

its adherents included one-half of the living people of the earth. It is well in this day of enlightenment that we should have available all possible information concerning that most complicated of all sciences, the science of living. Gautama Buddha was a master of the art of living, and his keen, logical, and reasonable viewpoint on life and the responsibilities of life will do much to correct the erroneous standards which at the present time fetter the minds of men.

God works in many ways, through many vehicles, and in many lands, but if ever there was one through whom the Almighty labored in the cause of human understanding, it was the compassionate Lord of the Lotus. Buddha's teachings, filled with simple truths and sane deductions, in no way combat the principles of Christianity, but rather aid the Western world in its great task of studying its own Scriptures.

When we study the character of the great Prince Siddhartha, upon whom descended (or, rather, within whom was evolved) the golden powers of Buddhahood, we find we are dealing with a double mystery. First we have the individual as a historical personality. We find him struggling with the religious intolerance of his day, championing the cause of the com-

mon people, and offering to the great and the ignorant alike the hope of immortality. Running parallel with this we have the cosmic myth dealing with a great chain of celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, of which the lowly wanderer in his yellow robe was the twenty-ninth. While there is little doubt that he actually lived, the real mystery of the Lord Gautama and his pilgrimage in search of wisdom, like that of the Master Jesus, lies in the spiritual interpretation of the historical allegory. The wondrous initiate, who won by his sincerity and devotion the golden robe of immortality, demonstrates the infinite possibilities concealed within the unfolding consciousness of every individual.

We often refer to Jesus as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and it is interesting to note that Buddha also carries the complimentary title of Sakyashina which means "a lion."

The life of Buddha is a remarkable story of unselfishness, service, and great ideals. He was the son of a king, surrounded by every luxury, all of which he renounced that he might go forth as a wanderer and a mendicant to search for an answer to the problems of human destiny. It is related of the youth that seeing much misery about him he decided to devote his life to the answering of three

great questions: Whence came we? Why are we here? Whither are we going? This decision came as the result of four remarkable occurrences, which some maintain were literal happenings while others insist that they were visions shown to him that he might not forget the great labor for which he came into the world. The first three of these mysterious happenings forced upon his attention the problems of age, sickness, and death. "Why do people grow old?" he asked, but none could answer him. "From whence comes sickness, which suddenly and without apparent reason blights life and deprives man of even temporal happiness? What is that cold, silent form lying upon the couch of death? Does the consciousness die there? Is death the end of all things, or is it the release, a door opening into a room beyond?" Upon these problems the young prince meditated deeply, but could find no answer. Then came the fourth vision. A holy man, his face peaceful and calm, his soul certain of immortality, was revealed to the youth. The prince was shown by the example of the lowly mendicant that in peace and understanding were true happiness.

Inspired by the great need of his fellow creatures, the Prince of India crept silently from the palace and, leaving behind all the

attachments of earth, wandered penniless and alone among the hills and valleys of Hindustan, asking all with whom he came in contact if they could shed light upon the mystery of human life. Always the answer was in the negative. The holy men could argue and philosophize on many things, but none could untie the master knot of human fate. He mortified the flesh and by his religious austerities attained great fame as a holy man. He prayed and fasted and wandered, gathering around him a number of disciples who worshipped him because of his untiring zeal and remarkable courage. Undermined by exposure, tormented by religious practices, and suffering from malnutrition, at last his body broke down, and the young wanderer suddenly awoke to the realization that all his labors and self-persecutions had produced nothing; that he was no nearer the solution of his question than when he dwelt in idleness in the palace of his father. As the result of a long heart-to-heart talk with himself, Gautama ordered a meal and ate it with relish. Immediately all the disciples deserted him. The idol of India came tumbling from his gilded throne. The great holy man had eaten like sinners did. Deserted and beset with uncertainties, Buddha wandered on, tempted by the demons of the

lower worlds, weakened by his own realization of failure.

At last, weak and deserted but unvanquished, Gautama sank down under the spreading branches of the Bo-tree, where he determined to remain until he had fought out with himself the problems that beset him. Slowly, as the hours passed, a great peace descended upon him. His mind, no longer beset with worries and problems, cleared. Gradually he rose through the worlds of space and beheld clearly the drama of human existence. He saw both the cause of things and their remedies. The demons that had persecuted him at last fell upon their knees in adoration. All Nature rejoiced. The gods bestowed their blessings, and the World Teacher was ordained to his ministry. It was here that the Prince Gautama became the Lord Buddha. Perfect in wisdom and understanding, free from the mist of illusion, he rose from his seat under the Bo-tree and went forth to preach the gospel of liberation. Passing to the old city of Benares, he stopped at the little town of Sarnath, where he found five of the disciples who had deserted him. He persuaded them to listen, and there upon a hillock, surrounded by these five, the Lord Buddha preached his first sermon and made the first five converts of what

later became the world's largest religion. For a period of over forty-five years, he then preached the gospel of enlightenment, which he called the Doctrine of Dharma, the philosophy of the Middle Path. He condemned all extremes. He abolished the mortification of the flesh and instructed his disciples in a great moral philosophy, which is as good to-day as when he first preached it. He turned the wheel of the law, and is today recognized as one of the world's great benefactors. At last, after over eighty years of service to mankind, nearly fifty of which were in active ministry, he passed out, surrounded by his disciples, his last words being:

"Now I depart to Nirvana. I leave with you my ordinances; the elements of the All-Knowing One shall indeed pass away, but the three gems will remain. * * * Mendicants, I now impress it upon you that the parts and powers of man must be dissolved; work out your salvation with diligence." (The three gems were: the life of the Buddha, the word of the Buddha, and the church of the Buddha).

Thus closed the earthly existence of one of the most beautiful souls that ever struggled to emancipate the human race from the bonds of ignorance; one who lived according to his

philosophy, and died trusting his own soul to the same philosophy that he had taught his fellow creatures. Buddha lived to see the religion founded upon his doctrines attain to a position of influence and power. It is said of him that he finally burned his own body on the funeral pyre when all attempts to light it had failed; his ashes, divided into eighty thousand parts by the Emperor Asoka, have been carried to all parts of the known world, and over them magnificent monuments, dagobas, and towers have been raised by those who loved his words.

So much for the man. Now let us consider the spirit of Buddhism—far older, far more intricate than the simple one who manifested it unto men. Buddha, the compassionate one, who after mastering the lower desires of life opened within himself the Buddhic Eye as related in the Legend of the Bo-tree, finally decided that two great laws were the real keys to the mystery of being. They have survived to this day as the laws of Reincarnation and Karma. Buddha himself is said to have remembered over five hundred of his earth lives. On the walls of one of his temples in Java are a series of carvings supposed to represent all of his appearances upon the earth since the time when he was a turtle.

His disciples loved to show the great sincere devotion that Buddha had for his fellow creatures. They fondly believed that even then he was the friend of man and they represent him in his turtle incarnation as bringing a group of shipwrecked sailors to shore on his back. There are few people who have earned for themselves the title of "The Friend of Humanity," but in the East no one disputes the right of the Lord Buddha to be called the great humanitarian, the great religious reformer, and the servant of humanity.

The Buddhists teach that the life of their great emancipator typifies certain spiritual processes in the human body and certain aspects of our ever-evolving consciousness. All the demigods and celestial creatures of the ancient worlds were supposed not only to personify great powers in Nature but also to represent certain fixed principles in the constitution of the human soul. Buddha typifies the striving and wandering of every individual seeker after truth, and also the internal spiritual consciousness in the great search for its lost throne from which some day it shall rule the nature of man.

The spirit of man is a wanderer, a lowly mendicant, searching on the surface of the lower worlds for wisdom, climbing eternally

upward with its eyes on the snow-covered mountains, holding out its tiny alms dish, or *lota*, to catch not pennies, but those waters of life necessary to the growth of every soul.

We are told that while Buddha was wandering, penniless and alone, he needed a garment, so entering a graveyard he took the shroud from a corpse, a piece of tattered yellow cloth. In the East we hear much of the yellow robe, which is universally accepted as the garment of the Buddhist priest. A great organization has accepted the symbol of the shroud, which the Master picked from the dead, and the Brothers of the Yellow Robe go forth in the name of their beloved Master, glorified and inspired by the privilege of wearing a garment copied from the one which the Lord Buddha had taken from the roadside grave. Many an Eastern mystic longs to be worthy to wear such a garment. While preparing for that great day and wandering through unknown lands, we also find him with his three strand braid, which he uses to gird his garment or wears around his neck close to his heart. Up this rope he will some time climb, for it is a mystic cord many times stronger than any of its single strands. It is composed of his spirit, his mind, and his body, braided into one rope strong enough to sup-

port his consciousness as he climbs upward from the ruined temple of the lower man.

The yellow robe represents the transmuted life energies which, radiating outward through the vital body, form around him a halo of golden light. There will never be a Christian too good to wear the yellow robe that the Buddha earned the right to wear, for the golden garment represents the aura of light which Christians paint around the heads and bodies of the saints, and the wedding raiment of which Saint Paul has spoken. We are all of us Princes of India, regardless of our nationality or creed. Each of us must some day give up the kingdoms of the earth, as the Lord Buddha did, to seek that eternal light which is the life of men.

Far down in the nature of the lower man, in those parts of his being which call eternally for comfort, for the gratification of desires, and for the happiness of the moment, is a kingdom over which in time each of us will renounce his rulership. We shall not give up our worldliness because we must, but because we shall discover there is something more important, more permanent, more desirable. Some day, like the young Prince, we shall realize the unhappiness and sorrow that is the fate of those who live in the lower worlds

and the necessity of giving up these things and searching for the treasures which are eternal. Then we, too, shall cast off the royal robes of materiality and start our pilgrimage up the great mountains which lead to the homes of the adepts amidst the crags of the Himalayas. We, too, shall read the message of the lotus and, having seen the glory of its unfolded blossoms, recognize that we are but buds awaiting the time when we, too, shall blossom forth with the glory of awakened consciousness.

So in all climes and all countries Buddha, as yet unchristened by the great power of true spiritual illumination, seeks the answer to the problem of human consciousness. From one adept to another he goes amid the caves of Northern India, but his search is ever in vain, until finally within himself he finds the answer to the eternal problem of the ages. His own body, purified by prayer and meditation—which in this sphere of consciousness is service and daily mastery of problems—has become so ethereal that the golden light of the spirit within shines forth and he is robed in garments no king can buy. A great eye opens, the esoteric duplicate of his exoteric organs, and to him is shown a human problem with its solution, an answer which shows the divine

omnipotence and the all-guiding care of a righteous and merciful God. It is the same with each individual when he, or rather his center of consciousness, resting under the Bo-tree of his spinal column, masters the ethereal forms and tempters which come to break his silence. He then liberates his spiritual consciousness from the lower bodies and the one eye of spirit opened by his pilgrimage sees the great plan which brought it into being. Millions of years ago, when the first wave of life began upon our planet, we beheld one manifestation of an eternal pilgrimage. Millions of years before that, in forms and ways that we cannot recognize, the pilgrimage was under way. Millions of years in the future we shall still personify the eternal wanderer, seeking ever greater and fuller understanding—the opening of each new eye showing us with greater certainty others yet unawakened, the development of each new faculty showing us still more plainly the great number of faculties still latent.

It is said that Buddha was called the Lion. The lion is the king of beasts. For many centuries all members of the cat family, of which the lion is one, have been held sacred. There are two reasons for this. The first is that when a cat lies down it forms itself into

a ball, usually with its head and tail touching, and on account of the peculiar magnetic currents which run through a cat's body it was thought to be symbolic of the universe and the spiritual currents which course about and through it. Hence the feline family was held sacred by the Egyptian priests of Bubastis, especially the three-colored cats. The second reason for their veneration is that all members of the cat family are said to have the power of seeing in the dark, and they represent the spiritual sight which is capable of seeing in the darkness of the lower worlds. There is one other reason why both Buddha and the Christ are spoken of as lions. The lion is the symbol of courage, and those who lack courage soon lose in the great fight for spiritual illumination.

The little pictures and statuettes of Buddha which we now find in the store windows usually show the lotus lord with a small golden globe between the eyes in the middle of the forehead. This represents the awakened center of spiritual consciousness, or the divine spark in man which is said to be located in the frontal sinus between the physical eyes just above the root of the nose. Also in many pictures you will find symbols well worth studying. For instance, the beautiful

blossoms and flowers supposed to be embroidered upon his draperies symbolize undoubtedly the spiritual centers spinning and revolving within his aura. In many statues we find one of the Buddha's hands pointing upward and the other downward. One of the most famous paintings of Plato and Aristotle shows these two philosophers, one pointing to the sky and the other to the earth. One says, "We were born of heaven;" and the other answers, "We were born of earth." In the Buddha the balance of these two and the establishing of the Middle Path is symbolized by his hands, one of which draws down from above while the other lifts up from below. In other pictures we see his hands folded upon his lap in the form of a great circle and his feet crossed beneath him. These are symbolic of the completion of the two great circles of energy working within the human body, for together they form the figure eight, or the strange figure traced by Nature upon the head of the Cobra.

Although Gautama long ago left this earth, there is little doubt that the members of his religion out-number those of any other. Within the last few years a great number of Christians have embraced the Buddhist faith. This is the natural result of a truer understanding,

because the average individual fails to realize that Christianity, when considered as a doctrine, includes within itself all other religions. Much of the broadness of Christianity has been lost through the narrowness of so-called Christians, but the time will come when every student searching for truth will be glad to find it wherever he can and will realize that the knowledge that a Christian may gain from the religions which went before him will, if properly used, assist him to become a better student of the Christian religion.

In the teachings of the Illuminated Ones will be found many of the links which are missing or rather concealed by narrow-minded individuals, and without which Christianity is too involved for the average person. Buddha was one of the sons of the Great Flame. He was sent out as a worker among men from the Great White Brotherhood. Faithfully he carried on his work as a messenger of the powers of light and, regardless of creed or doctrine, all of the world owes homage to those unselfish ones who have labored for its betterment. There are few who have given up more in the name of truth than the Prince Siddhartha, and in his teachings he has unselfishly and without fear expressed the truths which he believed. As Jesus tore the veil from

the temple at Jerusalem and gave to all mankind the mysteries of creation, so the great Buddha, the Light of Asia, tore the veil from the Brahman temple and gave to the poor and the humble, the *sudra* and the slave, those truths which are now spread over three-quarters of the known world. The East loves him for the good he has done. He has opened the gates of immortality to the poor and to the humble. He has changed the circle of slavery into a cycle of progress. In days gone by, the priests of Buddha went forth into Burma, Korea, Japan, China, Java, Siam and many other nations, spreading the doctrine of compassion and fellowship to millions of suffering souls. Instead of converting with the sword, Buddhism has gone forth converting with love, and has proved that things can grow in peace and thrive in cooperation. The Buddhist faith has always been a series of educative doctrines assisting individuals to unfold their own latent possibilities.

Each of us must feel what a glorious thing it is to be able to give help to so many suffering ones. We today are the wanderers, the mendicants, struggling through life in the search for truth. We stand where Gautama stood at the time of his great renunciation. Before us stretch the two paths—those of self-

ishness and sacrifice—while between them stands the Lord Buddha, the shining teacher of the Middle Way. He chose wisely amidst unwise extremes; he sacrificed nothing and he saved nothing. How shall we choose?

The Great White Brotherhood, the school of the Great Masters, works with man through his fellowmen, not through angels from the skies. When we so devote our lives to the service of others that we become a possible channel for the carrying on of good, then the power of light makes use of us. The more we improve ourselves and unfold our latent possibilities with that great motto and motive as our guiding thought, the sooner will come the day when Christhood or Buddhahood will descend upon us; and from being unconscious channels we shall become conscious vehicles for the spreading of truth to the hungry ones of the world. We must accomplish this dissemination of wisdom by the use of the faculties which we have developed as the result of our pilgrimage. So when we think of this great Master of adepts, let us always see in him ourselves who, in the robes of mendicants, are seeking to change the garments of our unpurified bodies for the yellow robe of Buddhahood which we unwind from the dead illusion which we leave behind. Let us realize that,

like the Prince of India, we must carry our little bowl with us, asking alms eternally, asking guidance, strength, and truth, and praying that we may catch in the little cup of our own soul and preserve in it for the glory of the Divine the energies and life forces which now we waste in thoughtlessness and uncertainty.

TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

PART TWO

THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism is based upon the theory that ignorance is the cause of all worldly misery and that only self-knowledge and the knowledge of the relation of self to the Great Plan can combat this ignorance. Buddha taught that out of ignorance are born sin and iniquity. If the human race could see clearly, it would do right; but the blurred vision removes the incentive to right action and right thought which are absolutely necessary to intelligent living and true spirituality. Buddha's gods were god-men, human beings who had raised themselves above the ignorance of the race, and who, sitting upon the mountain peaks, gazed upon the entire pageantry of life, seeing with that fullness which makes all things good, while man, dwelling in the valleys, sees so little that all things seem bad.

The four noble truths concerning wisdom and ignorance are well worth the most careful thought. Buddha blamed existence for all the miseries of the world. By existence he meant

that individual separateness in which the one life temporarily dissociates itself from the life of the All and becomes the many lives. These many lives, no longer able to realize that they are one both in source and ultimate, produce in their blind ignorance the sins and sorrows of the world. Therefore the first of the noble truths is:

"To exist as a separate personality predestines suffering and sorrow."

The first sorrow may be called the yearning of the separate parts to know the sum of themselves. The compound vehicles in which human beings live are composed of many bodies and centers of sense and consciousness. Buddha taught that all the fruits of sense were sorrows. Therefore he called misery *Asrava*, which means *excretions from the world of sense*. We see around us every day the result of people wanting things they should not and cannot have. We also see the result of their trying to avoid the responsibilities which they should assume. We know that in the majority of cases man's wants and appetites are his undoing. Buddha taught that man's sense of possession was his greatest enemy, for the spirit and the desire for accumulation stole from him his reason and his intelligence. Therefore we

come to the second of the four noble truths, namely:

"The greatest cause of misery is the desire to possess and the desire to preserve things possessed."

To be attached to a thing is to be sad at the loss of it. To despise or hate a thing is to be unhappy at the approach of it. To desire to own a thing which is beyond our normal reach is to become morally a criminal and may lead to thievery, rape, or murder. To place value upon things is the basis of a desire for them. Therefore the Buddha taught to place value upon but one thing and that was right knowledge. Right knowledge alone was capable of proving the uselessness of everything else. When the spirit realized the uselessness and the impermanence of possession, then it was free from desire; and being free from desire, it had escaped the net thrown by the god of death to enslave the souls of men. This brings us to an understanding of the third noble truth:

"Freedom from suffering is attained by the slaying out of all desire save that for right knowledge."

In line with this we realize that attachment is the basis of the fear of death and that when an individual is not attached to his bodies

their coming and going will leave him unmoved; while if he loves them he will weep with their passing; and if he hates them he will weep with their coming. While his eyes are capable of tears, his soul is incapable of wisdom. While he is capable of accumulating or dispensing, he is incapable of wisdom. While he loves any one thing above all things, he is incapable of wisdom, for perfect self-control is the Middle Way between joy and sorrow, love and hate, life and death. The Middle Way is the way of the Buddha. In order to walk that Middle Way, we must understand the fourth noble truth, namely:

"The way of liberation and to the cessation of all opposites is the noble eightfold path, the way of immortality."

One of the ancient creeds of Buddhism is that no evil is to be done to anything. All good things are to be developed and unfolded, and every virtue is to be nurtured. The mind with its many complex functions must be brought into perfect subjugation. This is the way of attaining to Buddhahood.

There is a magnificent philosophy underlying all these things, based upon certain fundamental concepts. The first is that life, as we see it around us, is not the fullness of existence. Existence bears to life the same relationship

that time bears to eternity. Time may be established anywhere in eternity, but eternity is always the sum of time. So existence may be established in life, but life is the sum of existence. Life precedes existence; life follows existence. Existence is unreal; life is real. The greatness of life can alone judge the smallness of existence. Buddha was an evolutionist. His gods were growing gods. He never discussed the First Cause. The souls he served were growing souls. The spirits with whom he ministered he viewed as unfolding spirits. He taught that evolution was the process of existence being reabsorbed into life, and that the greatest of all attainments was the attainment of Nirvana, at which time the past, the present, and the future are absorbed into the eternal now. Buddha taught that attachment to existence prevented unity with life; that those things which prevented the return of the parts into their fundamental source were evil. Buddha realized that there were two paths, one for the ignorant who must go around and around with the Wheel of Life and Death in its narrowed sense; the other for the wise who, by self-knowledge and self-mastery, might release themselves from the spokes to which the ignorant clung in agony and thus be able to walk the Middle Way which, like the eternal now,

separates the dead yesterday from the unborn tomorrow.

This was the philosophy of the great Buddha, a philosophy of giving up each thing, that by so doing the soul might attain all things. He taught that desire for a certain thing resulted in sacrificing mighty treasures to secure the desired object which was probably of little value; but the fact that it was desired made it of great value. Therefore desire destroyed the sense of value, for desire placed worldly possessions above wisdom, and personalities above principles. Hence Buddha gathered together the legions of logic and reason and attacked the citadel of desire, preaching that the wants of man destroyed him, that his soul was buried under his own accumulations, and that his spirit was a slave to the tawdry gewgaws with which he had surrounded himself. He taught that the rich man had no rest, for he must sit sword in hand upon his money bags to defend them; and the poor man had no rest, for he was eternally being slain trying to unseat wealth from its pinnacle. With the dissolution of the universe these two stood gazing at the vacuum over which they had disputed, realizing that they had been bound to their possessions and, having built no character within themselves,

had nothing with which to face eternity.

Buddha was a believer in law, fixed and immovable. Nature, as he understood it, was good; therefore free from desire, which was his symbol of all evil. Hence Nature, being impersonal, was no respecter of whims, but went around and around in its predestined way, not heeding whether it was saint or sinner who was ground to pieces in its machinery. Buddha held out no vicarious atonement to his followers, teaching that God, whoever or whatever He was, loved all things equally, being far too true to any and all to indulge humanity in its caprices.

He realized that this globe on which we live, these worlds which we know, exist but for a moment in space; that all visible things are ever changing; that indeed the flowers bloom today and are gone tomorrow. He symbolized, like the Brahmans who went before him, the world as an everchanging sea upon which humanity floats in little ships buffeted by the winds, each trying to steer his bark to some appointed haven. It is useless to idealize a wave of the sea, for before its picture is formed in your mind it has changed and gone. So it is with living things. It was useless to place a standard in the ocean, for there is no permanence upon which to raise it. The sea

was life, as we see it, everchanging, never twice the same. Who tries to follow it in its moods must have as many moods as the sea itself. Who seeks permanence in it seeks a will-o'-the-wisp which may never be found. As Jesus walked upon the waters, so Buddha taught his disciples to stand upon the waves, and by the clear detachment of their minds to serve the permanent in everything and not to be misled by the white foam and the breaking waves, which, like the enterprises of man, are one moment high and crested and the next swallowed in the trough of the sea. Supreme above this changing thing, permanent, unmoved, the Buddha sat in meditation, for perfect peace and tranquillity were the symbols of his attainment. Surrounded by many things, he remained conscious of but one thing—the eternity and permanence of his immortal spirit.

All over the East we find the statues of the meditating Buddha. His great, calm, expressionless face gazes down from lofty shrines dimly visible through the lattice work of temple windows. A hundred thousand figures—yes, a hundred million—great and small, new and old, some gilded and jeweled, others broken and overgrown with weeds, but always one expression—a marvelous, impassive visage. In the tranquillity of its lines are hidden all ex-

pressions. Many of the ancient empires of the Buddhist faith have crumbled, and thousands of his statues have been broken up by the ruthless vandalism of men. The seismic cataclysms of Nature have overturned the mighty figures and left them half buried in the earth. Their temples have been burned above them, and the priests have been driven away, but still the great face, unmoved, unchanged, at peace through it all, indifferent to the rise and fall of things, speaks louder than words for the spirit of faith.

If the people in the Western world could only learn Buddha's way of immortality, if only the striving and the bustling and the endless confusion of our day could give place to the great peace and dignity of his ancient path, we would live much longer and accomplish a great deal more. The Western world is ruled by its desires. It lives only in its material senses. It defies the illusion. Every soul has its price in gold and silver, and children coming into the world are taught to become heartless machines designed to excel in the process of accumulating. Never have we needed his teachings more than now—teachings which showed his disciples the fallacy of the world hunt, but that happiness comes only with wisdom and that peace is a by-product, one of

the many virtues which are the results of right living and right living alone. We live in a world of cycles, and at certain intervals we recapitulate that which has gone before. Some day we shall again recognize the need of self-control and then we shall remember more fondly than now the one who suffered so long and labored so sincerely to give that knowledge to the world. The law of the Buddha is good, for he says:

“He who is not happy with nothing will not be happy with everything; he who does not cherish the little things will not be thoughtful of the great things; he with whom sufficient is not enough is without virtue, for the physical body of man lives only from day to day; if you supply it with what it actually needs, you will still have time to meditate, while if you seek to supply it with all it wants the task is without end.”

The Buddha taught his disciples to live not for the day only but to live for that great day in which lives are but minutes and births and deaths like the swinging of a pendulum. He taught them that their vices go forth with them into eternity to confront the soul eternally until it has made them right. He taught them to be humble, simple, and unassuming in all things, kindly to all—not only to human

beings but to the flowers and to the beasts. He taught his disciples to treasure and serve all life; that life subsists upon life and that therefore life owes to life a debt; that those who die that men may live shall not die in vain, but that those who live upon them shall use this life so freely given to serve the one life that gave it all.

H. G. Wells has taken the great Buddha, torn away his diadems, removed his gilded robes, stripped the faith of its later accretions, and presented to the world the Buddha as he really was—the simple wanderer, the kindly heart, the unselfish one, who wandered with his three questions over the surface of the world, realizing full well that until they were truly answered the race could never intelligently serve itself or the plan which gave it being. So he answered the questions thus:

✓ Whence came we? *Answer:* Out of the past; out of the things which we have done before; out of the labors unfinished, the fruitage incomplete; out of the past vices and virtues; out of the sins of our own flesh; out of the darkness of our own ignorance; out of a chain of lives that leads up from the muck and the mire; out of the dawn of things; out of the faith of Dharma; out of the sum of things, gradually into the separateness of

things; out of the One into the many, carrying from life to life the burden of the past, with us ever trooping a strange group led by the demon of Desire, our faults and failings, dancing around our tortured souls. Thus we came down into the present, bringing with us the virtues and the vices of the past; and urged on by the endless law of progress, we pass from the separateness of ignorance to the oneness of wisdom.

Why are we here? *Answer:* We are here because of the past, for the past gives birth to the present and from the present is born the future; we are here to finish, or at least to carry on, the labor we brought with us incomplete from the dawn of things; we are brought here by our own joys and sorrows, and most of all we are led here by our desires, and here we remain until the last desire is dead, until the last possession is renounced, until the last of that accumulation of personality which we have brought with us is returned again into the great All from whence it came. If we come ignorant, we come to accumulate; if we are born in wisdom, we come to disseminate. To the wise man, the life he lives here is an opportunity to rid himself of the ballast which he has accumulated in the past; to rid himself of his notions, his viewpoints; to rid himself

of his concepts of life and death; and, leaving them all behind, to place his feet upon the Middle Way. At the gateway to futurity the road forks. One goes on to Nirvana. It is the noble path to attainment. The other twists back again to go through it all again, again, and again, until at last the spirit learns its lesson and chooses of its own free will to walk the Middle Path.

✓ Whither are we going? *Answer:* We go to meet our deserts; we go to the effects of our causations. Those whose labors are unfinished merely go around the wheel and return again to labor towards fuller completion. Those few who have discovered the way step from this mortal coil upon the middle road which leads to Nirvana where, his labors done, the individual returns to the Causeless Cause from whence he came, to await a more noble destiny as the Maker of Things sees fit. It is said that the Lord Buddha had finished his labors; he had learned the only lesson this world can teach—the lesson of discrimination; and, having learned to choose wisely between the permanent and impermanent, he had unmasked the great illusion. To unmask the faults is the labor of the soul. To stand in equilibrium in the midst of things is the way of Buddha. To contemplate life but never to

be enmeshed within life is the law of the Buddha. To go forth out of life into life is the desire of the Buddha. To become one again with the infinite Cause, to know once more the shining One from whom all came, to be one again with that eternal something which is the sum of all things—this is liberation, this is freedom. To be absorbed again into the Reality is the end of the great Buddha.

TEACHING OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

PART THREE

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE BUDDHA

1. *Thou shalt not slay.* Life is sacred in Nature. To slay is to accept Karma of having impeded a life in its quest for the eternal. To slay is to remove an opportunity for growth, and one who impedes a spirit in its search for eternity is a greater sinner than any other. The harmless life is the life of the Buddhist. Not only must he refrain from slaying the bodies of things, but he must also beware lest he slay the hopes of man, lest he slay an ideal or kill out a good virtue in another through thoughtlessness or unkindness. For the lesser creatures—the animals and the plants and minerals—he must also show love and affection. As he becomes more highly advanced, he must not slay anything, but must live upon the fruits of things and use them only after they have reached maturity—the point at which they otherwise would begin to decay of their own accord.

2. *Thou shalt not steal.* That which belongs to another the Buddhist shall have no desire for, and the crime is not only in taking

but in desiring that which belongs to another. The true Buddhist counts the sin of theft an exceedingly great one, as it proves the presence of the demon of desire, which is the most terrible of all sins. Not only shall he respect his friend's belongings, but he shall not steal from his honor, hope, or any moral possession, nor shall he covet the heart or the mind or the soul of any other thing, nor shall he steal from the animal or the plant or any living thing.

3. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* This again shows desire, and is listed with the great sins. It is here also that the Buddhist emphasizes the fact that a sin committed in the mind is as great an offense as one committed in the body, and the desire for sin is a proof of the teachings of the great Buddha that desire is the source of sin.

4. *Thou shalt not lie.* To the Buddhist laity there must be no prevarication. The Buddhists are taught that a lie goes forth into Nature as an evil spirit where it fights with the reality of the incident or condition, and it is a sin that there be war anywhere in the universe and the one who tells the falsehood assails the reality and places stumbling-blocks in the way of other souls.

5. *The Buddhist shall not partake of strong*

drink. It is said that drink turns man over to his enemy, the desires; therefore he shall never take into himself anything which makes difficult his control of himself. His drink shall be water, and his food of the simplest possible nature, for simplicity is a symbol of wisdom and complication is a symbol of ignorance.

6. *He shall eat no food save at times appointed.* The Buddhist is expected to control his life and to choose certain periods for all of the habits of life. He is expected to show his control over himself by formulating certain periods and laws and adhering to them absolutely. When he departs from these he shows that he is attacked again by his enemy, desire. The common people, under normal conditions, do not attempt to follow any except the first five commandments. The rest apply to the clergy, to the students and disciples and those who have assumed the responsibility of growth and are preparing themselves for the sacred Middle Path.

7. *The Buddhist shall not adorn himself, nor wear expensive ornaments, nor use perfumes, nor garland himself with flowers or any similar thing.* This is enforced that he may never deify his personality nor seek for any adornment or ornament other than virtue, which is the perfect ornament and the perfect

jewel. He shall seek to adorn and glorify only his spirit. He shall preserve and take care of his body, but never glorify it above its human estate.

8. *He shall never sit in an exalted seat.* He is ever to be humble, realizing that in humility is safety in those things which deal with the spirit. He recognizes egotism as the deadly enemy of growth, and that pride indeed goeth before a fall. Only the perfect Buddha is permitted a throne; all others must kneel at his feet. Only perfect wisdom can be exalted with justice to all the land.

9. *He shall not take part in any worldly spectacles or glamors.* He is never to go into the presence of those things which excite his senses or which tend to involve him in material things, for the glamor of worldliness is apt to make him forget its falseness and unreality. He is to remain alone and quiet, meditating upon great things, free from involvement of sense.

10. *He is to be without possessions, nor is he to accept them for himself.* The Buddhist candidate is seeking liberation from possession, that he may learn to value only the possession of wisdom; therefore it is against his will and his law to add to a thing from which he is seeking to separate himself.

TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

PART FOUR

THE TWO GREAT LAWS

The Buddhist in his philosophy takes the stand that law and order are supreme in Nature. Law is beyond the whim of man. It is eternal and fixed. Therefore wisdom lies in learning those laws which are the basis of the Eternal Plan and then in so harmonizing the nature that it shall cooperate with law and climb to attainment upon the structure of the universal plan. To the Buddhist two laws are supreme. The first is the law of *reincarnation*. It seems difficult for the average Christian to understand the cycle of rebirth, and yet any thinking person must realize that it is the only answer to the problems of human inequality. It is unthinkable that a merciful Father should blight lives still unformed and foreordain by whim alone the fate of living creatures. There is no justice in the belief that heredity makes a soul suffer for the sin of its parents, yet most people apparently would rather take a chance on the whims of Deity than to accept the doctrine which places the responsibility of life upon human shoulders.

The law of reincarnation is a fundamental tenet of the Buddhist faith. Reincarnation is the only concept of life which is universal in opportunity and personal responsibility. While the acceptance of this law does not bring heaven closer, it does dissipate the concept of hell eternal which is the bugaboo of the Christian religion. If any deserve the punishments of an eternal hell of fire and brimstone, it is those who invented the concept. It is unreasonable and irrational to suppose that one life, lived amidst the difficulties which beset the human race, should be the only opportunity. To imagine that as the result of a few decades lived here a person shall go to heaven or hell for all eternity is unfair beyond all other concepts of the human mind.

The doctrine of reincarnation teaches equal opportunities for all and special privileges for none, success being the reward for work well done and failure the penalty of indolence. It removes the responsibility for the saving of the human soul from the shoulders of the Deity and places it where it belongs—upon the shoulders of the individual. Buddha told his disciples to work out their own salvation, and thinking people know that in the last analysis this is the one and only way of attaining peace.

The law of reincarnation justifies and pre-

serves the dignity of the plan of creation. It explains human inequality, and to those who really desire to attain truly intelligent positions in Nature it offers the incentive of ultimate attainment for every living thing. It teaches that the work left unfinished today will be picked up tomorrow and carried on until at the end victory crowns the struggle of every living thing to know itself.

The law of reincarnation may be defined as the application of the law of evolution to the individual consciousness of man. We know that forms grow. We are able to study the gradual evolution of physical structure from simple beginnings to complex maturity, and from thence back again to simple ultimates. Reincarnation teaches that the individual grows through Nature and with Nature, age after age, and that the unfolding forms around us in Nature bear witness to the unfolding center of consciousness which we realize is the invisible cause behind every visible form. The law of reincarnation teaches that man returns again periodically to the physical earth, assuming his physical labors where he left them off before, and continuing this through the ages until all the lessons of the physical world have been learned. The Eastern philosophies teach that there are about

eight hundred incarnations to a life wave, and that the spirit is born into the physical world and dies out of the physical world about eight hundred times while learning the lessons of the human race. The Buddhist does not divide man from Nature, but rather places man as a product of Nature, teaching that he is ever controlled by the laws of Nature until he learns to walk the Middle Way, which finally releases him from Nature only after he has outgrown his environments. The Buddhist makes man a student and life a school. He calls the periods between birth and death days in school, separated from each other by nights of rest. With the law of reincarnation he answers many questions. He explains why some are born rich and others poor, some surrounded by opulence and others in the midst of poverty. He is satisfied with life, realizing that he is the cause of life as he knows it. We can sum up this philosophy in the following thoughts:

Every individual is exactly what he has earned the right to be. He is exactly where he has earned the right to be. He is surrounded with such happiness as he has earned for himself in the past. He is confronted today with debts which he incurred yesterday and which he must meet. The unhappiness in his

present life is the result of the suffering he has caused others in a previous life. If his body is weak today, it is because he neglected it in his last incarnation. If he has no friends today, it is because he made no friends in his last existence. He is today the sum of the past. Those gifts or faculties which he enjoys today are the result of the sincere labor of yesterday, while his faults and failings are the result of the fact that in previous lives he did not control himself and failed to build virtues.

It is easy to see from this the absolute honesty of his viewpoints on life. He does not know the meaning of blind chance. Cause and effect rule his universe. He has no place for miracles, no room for vicarious atonements, and no petty politics in religion. Everything is supreme justice, with intelligence and mercy.

The second of the great Buddhist laws is a necessary outcome of the first. It is called the law of *Karma*, which literally translated means *compensation*, or cause and effect applied to the actions of individuals. It is the same thought which the Master Jesus expressed in the sowing and reaping. It is best expressed by the epigram: "As ye ^{sow}, so shall ye reap." The Buddhist teaches that every one of us is paying the debts of the past and preparing our fate for the future by our daily living here

and now. We may sum his thoughts concerning the law of Karma as follows:

Every effect in nature is equal to the cause which produces it. In spiritual things action and reaction are equal. Every thought and ideal in life as activity has a reaction according to and measured by the action which produced it. Sickness, sorrow, and infirmity are all the result of our own misuse of and ignorance concerning the great powers of nature. Every individual is personally responsible for every joy and sorrow which he meets in any walk of life. Therefore, under all suffering and grief the Buddhist must be patient, realizing that his own unkindness to others, his own failure to meet the responsibilities of life, his own lack of self-control, his own thoughtlessness, are the causes of every sorrow that confronts him and of every misfortune that overtakes him. He recognizes the fact that the physical medium through which the misfortune appears is not to be personally blamed, for such a personal condition is merely the vehicle whereby the law of Karma acts. He also realizes that he not only carries forward from life to life the debts unpaid but also brings with him the good Karma for the things he has done well. He realizes that when he learns to do all things well then he

will build only good Karma. The law of reincarnation gives him the opportunity to correct his mistakes. Thus, regardless of his present status spiritually or physically, he will some day be perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect. This is the law of Karma.

These two laws are the backbone of the Buddhist viewpoint. Their absolutely impersonal and just attitude on life is one of the crowning glories of the ancient Buddhist faith. They placed virtue above all riches, and integrity above all treasures. Not by prayer but by works is perfection attained; but the great hope is offered, for in the faith of the Buddha even the stick and the stone is thought of. Everything has its place in Nature. All things are included in the Plan, and perfection awaits all creatures.

TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

PART FIVE

THE TWO GREAT VIRTUES

Two great traits of character must be developed by those who seek to understand the Middle Path of the Lord Buddha, for his path is a twofold path and those who walk it must enter upon their task by developing above all others the virtues of *compassion* and *renunciation*.

The Buddhist aspirant is eternally seeking to transmute human passion to divine compassion. Realizing that all things, when used naturally, are good and, when used unnaturally, are evil, he seeks to transmute the unnatural personal attachments and affections to the natural kindliness and thoughtfulness which should always mark the dealings of one living thing with another. The Buddhist is taught to serve life, to work with life, and to recognize the divinity of life in everything. The life he serves is that invisible spiritual germ of Self-consciousness which is concealed within the half-formed bodies of each thing with which he comes in contact.

The state of compassion gradually grew within the Buddhist until he lived only to do good. He lived only to serve the divine life which he had learned to recognize. He believed that the greatest wisdom was the ability to see the good concealed in every living thing. Often that good was destroyed or at least its growth stunted by ignorance and sorrow; but the Buddhist had bound himself to serve that good, to serve that spirit of hope in everything. We may define his compassion as impersonal love. When, instead of centering his affection upon one thing, he turned it into the service and protection of all things, he was said to be compassionate and wise. The Buddhist was taught to love the blades of grass, to care for the animals when they were hurt. He called the blades of grass and the stones and the animals his little brothers. He believed that some time they would grow up into human beings like he was, and he saw in their mute suffering the stages of growth through which his own soul had passed. He was kind to them and nursed them in their need. He then turned to the great invisible ones, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the invisible *Devas*, and called them his big brothers, his elder brethren, and longed for the day when he should be like them, mighty lights in the heavens. He

was taught to know that all life was growing and that he best served things when he helped them grow. So with malice toward none and charity to all, recognizing in all difference one life in various stages of its pilgrimage, he learned not to judge nor to criticize things, but simply to love them and serve them unselfishly and unreservedly. His faith taught him that when he loved all things as his own, and loved his own as he loved all things, then the frail human emotions had given place to greater and more divine feelings. The Buddhist believed that the more impersonal his feelings the more they were like God's feelings, for he believed that God loved all things equally and, while he did not study God as a person, he believed in that all-brooding presence that represented the sum of wisdom and the sum of true affection. These were the teachings of his compassionate Lord and Master, and these he revered.

The second great state of consciousness he must attain was the virtue of renunciation. He must renounce self; he must renounce the possessions of self; he must renounce personality and the products of personality, for all these things are causes of misery: all these things blind the senses and bind the consciousness to the Wheel of Life. His ideal was to

separate himself entirely from the material world and from the laws of the material world until, while he lived in it, he existed only as a physical creature for the sake of the good he could do. He believed that he was happy only when he forgot himself and that his soul could never attain peace until he was too busy helping others to think of himself. He believed all sins to be born of idleness, all sorrows derived from love and hate, and all disasters result from the desire to accumulate or to excel in material things. He renounced the world and the things of the world, seeking to pierce the veil of human ignorance by rising above those things which chain the senses and benumb the soul.

✓ He who has given up all things has also given up the ability to lose things, for how can we lose without the sense of possession? How can we be happy with the sense of loss? But ✓ owning nothing, possessing nothing, desiring nothing, man is the ruler of all things. When wanting nothing he has everything he wants. People should remember that these Buddhist concepts are not merely things to be accepted as intellectual facts, for intellectual facts are about as helpful as a book on diet to a hungry man. It is only when they become realities in consciousness that they really serve their pur-

pose. Man cannot learn by accepting; he can learn only by becoming these things. As the Buddhist would say, I am not an egoist, therefore I cannot be offended; I am free from emotions and desires, therefore I cannot be made angry; I love no thing more than any other thing, therefore I cannot be made jealous; I own no thing more than any other thing, therefore I cannot be grieved by loss; I serve all things for the love of things, not for any reward, therefore I am unmoved by ingratitude and criticism. Being therefore without misery, I am without happiness, for happiness cannot exist without misery and misery cannot exist without happiness. Between these two, upon the Middle Path, I stand, calm, dignified and unmoved, filled with a great peace that surpasseth understanding, calm and certain in the knowledge of immortality, free from the torment of appetites, free from the bondage of sense, liberated from the slavery of the mind, released from the uncertainty of ignorance. I have that for which all men seek—the cessation of misery and the dawn of completeness. Steadfast in determination, everything is mine, because I never claim it; and, never claiming it, my ownership is never disputed.

TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

PART SIX

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

These are the noble perfections, the ways of enlightenment as given by the thrice-blessed Lotus Lord to his disciples as they gathered at his feet, concerning those things which lead to the cessation of suffering, the end of sorrow, the completion of life, and the liberation from the wheel. These are the petals of the sacred lotus which, opening one by one, reveal at last the golden heart, the perfect law.

The first virtue of the noble eightfold path is *right belief*.

If a person views life in a healthy way, he will be as relatively happy as any creature containing within itself the element of ignorance can hope to be. A normal viewpoint of life and a normal viewpoint concerning the relationship of our little life in the flesh to our great life in the universe, is absolutely necessary to the progress of the human soul. The world is filled with morbid, neurotic people to whom all the world looks blue; it is filled with broken-hearted, disillusioned people; it is

filled with men and women soured upon life, ready to give up the battle, feeling themselves too weak to struggle with things which seemed inevitable. In other words, it is filled with people with unhealthy viewpoints. Those who meet their sorrows with patience and their problems with composure, those who see in each disappointment something to spur them on to greater achievement—these have the right viewpoint of life. Those who rise triumphant, phoenix-like from the ruins of their broken dreams—these understand the first golden precept of the noble eightfold path.

Right belief in self, right belief in our fellow creatures, a viewpoint which is neither critical nor unkind, neither faultfinding nor meddling, but ever trusting in the ultimate triumph of good, ever allying itself with the forces of good—such is right viewpoint and right belief.

The second virtue of the noble eightfold path is *right aspiration*.

Right aspiration means that the thing to which we aspire is worthy of us. Those who aspire to the greatest wisdom, to the greatest good, to the greatest unfoldment of their own natures, to the closest relationship between the parts of themselves, to clear-sightedness that they may always discern the true through the

false, the permanent through the impermanent, the greater through the lesser—such have right aspirations. Those who aspire to control themselves, to coordinate individual faculties, to liberate themselves from attachments, to educate, unfold, and enlighten those about them—such have right aspirations.

Those who aspire to be wealthy, to be loved by those whom they love, to control others, to be revered by men—such have wrong aspirations, for they are asking for things which bring only sorrow to their possessor. Right aspiration is the pursuit of truth above all things, of which virtue is first; to self-control above all things, of which compassion is first. Such are the teachings of the great Buddha.

The third virtue of the noble eightfold path is *right speech*.

Right speech means that a watch shall be set upon the lips, that there shall go forth only words of encouragement, kindness and helpfulness. It is a sin to waste words, to send forth out of the mouth unkind words or critical words. No wisdom comes through argument, no truth through dissension. Let the words be few and kind; let them be well-chosen, and not loudly spoken. Let the words be to the glory of the Great One—an incense rising unto the nostrils of the Most High. Let

the tongue preach the gospel of goodness and compassion. To use the mouth for idle gossip, slander, and backbiting is the greatest of all sins, for such things are an offense unto the ears of God. He who uses his tongue as a sword shall be cut down with his own weapon. Let him emulate the Lord Buddha, whose lotus lips, when they opened, were the life of men; whose words were as pearls to be treasured and revered unto all days and generations. This is right speech, that the words shall be treasured in the hearts of those who listen and enshrined in the soul of those to whom they are spoken—words which are to the soul as the sound of waters flowing—peaceful, pure, and undefiled.

The fourth virtue of the noble eightfold path is *right conduct*.

The aspirant after wisdom is known to men by the way he conducts himself. He is known by the simplicity of his manner, by the grace and dignity of his soul which shines resplendent through the body, whatever shape that body be. The aspirant is seen as an unassuming person, never boisterous nor forward. For every word he utters, he listens to a dozen. He is never offensive nor discourteous; he never forgets his relationship to those around him and the courtesy due them. When he is

the host, he is thoughtful of his guests. When he is the guest, he is thoughtful of his host. He hurts no man's feelings, but preaches the gospel of the Middle Way by the beauty and grace of his spirit.

He takes no part in conflicts and disorders, nor does he side with good or evil. Having no prejudices, he has no dignity and no selfishness to uphold. Quiet, simple, and peaceful among the combative, silent among the talkative, poised among the excited, living among the dead, he walks the Middle Way, never swerving aside even for a moment. He who controls his tongue, his hand, his foot, his mind, and his heart—such a one is incapable of anything except right conduct.

The fifth virtue of the noble eightfold path is that *each should choose a right mode of livelihood*.

The disciple is not permitted to go into those enterprises which are against his principles, for principles cannot stand when divided against each other. If he believes not in slaying, he must enter into no enterprise which demands slaying. If he believes not in gold and silver, he must abstain from their use. If he believes not in buying and selling, he must go into lines of livelihood which comply with his viewpoints concerning life. No

true person, regardless of his faith, is sufficiently strong to have two standards, one for his business and one for his home, one for his neighbor and one for himself. To have two standards is to have none at all. Therefore, right livelihood means that each should choose a labor which is true to the principles that he is seeking to develop within himself.

Right livelihood also means the right way to live, right food, right clothing, right environment, right harmony in the home and in business. All these are necessary before wisdom can be born within the soul, for wisdom is the pearl of great price and none can secure this matchless treasure without the greatest of all struggles. It is not easy to be consistent, but only those who are consistent can ever hope to be wise, for consistency and wisdom are synonymous.

The sixth virtue of the noble eightfold path is *right effort*.

All things come as a result of effort. We must try, but we must try intelligently, otherwise our effort produces no result. The disciple is taught that to desire a thing without being willing to earn it is a great sin; that in spiritual things the candidate must expect nothing that he is not willing to pay for in coin suitable to the plane of the transaction. All

things come to those who try, and those who try sincerely will gain the thing for which they struggle. The word *sincerity* covers the principle of right effort. If your motive is not right, the thing which you gain will never serve the truth which you desire. The Buddhist disciple is taught that he must be honest and sincere and that an ulterior motive of any kind is fatal. If he wants power that he may use it to control others, he is not sincere, and whatever power he gains will only injure him; but if he desires intelligence that he may use it to assist and to illuminate his fellow creatures, he is then sincere and will secure any power which he does not desire to use for himself.

The Middle Way is the path of sincerity, in which the heart and the mind together, struggle to build the character. Right effort is the doing of right because it is right. It is right motive, and all things are good or bad according to the motive for them.

The seventh virtue of the noble eightfold path is *right mindfulness*.

The disciple is taught to be always thoughtful. The duty of the mind is to be thoughtful, to anticipate the needs of others, and to meditate upon the needs of the Self. The duty of

the mind is to discriminate between needs and wants, and wise are they who can do so.

When mental mastery is achieved, the thoughts are always kindly and the life is harmless. Many a sin is committed in the mind of one who is strong enough to withstand it and not commit the crime, but his thought goes forth as a living thing and enters into the mind of another who is weak. The latter commits the crime, but who is really to blame? The law can never answer, but the mystic knows that the one to blame was the one in whose mind the evil thought was first born. Courtesy, kindness, consideration for the needs of others—all of these are the virtues of right mindfulness. These go a long way toward making the world a better place to live in; for great is he who can put the house of his mind in order, can drive out of the temple of his thoughts the money-changers and the vendors of birds and beasts as the Master Jesus did on the Temple steps at Jerusalem.

The mind is always critical. It tears down; it dissects and analyzes, searching always for points of difference. This is wrong. Right mindfulness dwells upon those things which we all have in common, building with the power of its thought-force the spiritual con-

cept of brotherhood which will some time rule the people of the earth.

The eighth virtue of the noble eightfold path is *right meditation*.

This, of course, pertains to the mystic and occult practices used by the Buddhists, and also to those periods during life when the soul retires to dwell in the silence and depths of its own nature. In the Western world few dare dwell in the temple of solitude, for their lives are such that thoughts are their enemies and not their friends. The evil they have done, the failures they have made troop as a ghostly cortege into their minds if they are silent for a moment. The fear of the future is an obsession, the fears of the past an overwhelming flood. Hence they live in a mad riot of falseness to escape the thoughts that would intrude were they alone.

The Buddhists teach that until the individual can face his own life unafraid, meditate upon his own works and honestly see that they are good, he is not ready for the Middle Path. Meditating upon the Reality to the exclusion of all else, the opened eye of his soul revealing to him the Spirit of all things, the great Buddha passed into Nirvana. In a lesser way, the disciple, as he sits down for those daily little heart-to-heart talks with himself so

necessary to the true growth of every soul, separates himself for a moment from body and mind, looks upon the sum of his works. He steps from the shadow of the temporal into the light of the eternal, and these are the cherished moments each day when, though surrounded by cares but separated from the world about by the perfect poise of the priest, the aspirant dwells with the spirit of his Buddha, the light eternal. This is right meditation—that the spirit of man should dwell for a moment upon the mountain and gaze down upon his universe. Separate for a moment from his likes and dislikes, from all that is personal, he will see clearly the purpose of it all. Strengthened by his realization, deepened by this holy communion, broadened by the light that it reveals to him, the seeker then returns to the duties of the day inspired by the vision vouchsafed to him in his moments of right meditation.

TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

PART SEVEN

NIRVANA: THE POINT OF EXTINCTION

The majority of Western students of Eastern literature have come to erroneous conclusions concerning the Oriental doctrine of Nirvana. It has been interpreted to mean the end of all things, but this is not the true thought implied.

The ultimate destiny of the human soul is a problem about which very little can be said in a definite way. The mind of man, only partly developed as yet, is incapable of thinking or even of intelligent speculation concerning ultimates. It is philosophically impossible for the mind to conjecture successfully or intelligently outside of the radius of the known. Therefore when we draw mental pictures of the future we are forced to paint them in the colors of the present. When we speculate upon the infinite we must do so in the terms of the finite. Thus our speculations, instead of lifting us into the realms of the infinite, merely tend to bring the abstract into the limited existence which is our area of activity.

Nirvana, the end of all beginnings, is the Buddhist ultimate. It implies a great deal more than heaven. It is a condition of absorption, a state of personal elimination, in which the many are reabsorbed into the One. Many people argue that this absorption is contrary to the law of eternal progress, and also that it makes life an absolutely useless thing; for why, they ask, should we be given an intelligence if we are ultimately to lose it? Why should we pass through experiences if the memory, as the faculty of recording them, is some time to be destroyed? Even many of the Buddhists themselves do not understand the doctrine of Nirvana, because it involves a fourth dimensional aspect of consciousness which cannot be imagined because it is without parallel or analogy. The doctrine may be expressed as follows:

After the Wheel of Birth and Death is finished, and evolution has carried the human spirit to the point where it has absorbed all of the not-self into the Self and extracted from objectivity all of the lessons of existence, it is then free from the cycle of existence, because it has within its nature none of those material and concrete faculties or functions which can hold it to the planes of objective manifestation. Man is composed of many parts; chief among

them are the spirit and body. Gradually the body is transmuted into soul qualities, and these soul qualities are absorbed into the spiritual nature. When this process of transmutation is complete, the individual leaves those planes of Nature which are existent only to those still living in their material natures, and unites itself with those worlds which are composed entirely of spiritual substances. Spirit is fourth dimensional. It is interpenetrating. It is within the center of all things, and it is also the sum of all things. Its center is nowhere, and its circumference is everywhere. The individual is annihilated as a personality when his lower bodies, which give rise to the illusion of personality, are absorbed into soul qualities. He then ceases to exist as an individuality when the mind is absorbed into the spiritual nature. But although those idiosyncrasies by which we would recognize such an individuality have been removed, the spiritual nature has not been interfered with nor injured. Those who have entered Nirvana have not ceased to be units of consciousness, but rather, like the spirit world in which they dwell, have extended their consciousness over the entire area of spirit. As a result, they unite themselves with the centers of spiritual substance within all creatures. The spirit that

has reached such a degree of unfoldment no longer appears in the world as a personality. He no longer has disciples, nor does he preach to people. We may rather say he preaches from people, for he manifests outward from the spiritual centers of all living things. He becomes a power for good in the universe, an urge in the soul of everything. Therefore he goes on, not as a personality but as a principle, and his attainments become an urge towards attainment in the lives of all things. As man or woman, such a one has indeed reached the point of annihilation, but as a divine spirit such a one has just entered into the opportunity for greatest usefulness. We often say, "the Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is taught in the East that when our elder brothers pass on to Nirvana and cease to be personalities, they become great impulses in the life of things: they give to every creature the power to become as they were; they increase the capacity of every soul by giving to that soul the fruitage of their own spiritual accumulations. Therefore it is said that the spirit, dying out of the world of effects after the attainment of Buddhahood, is born into the world of causes where it is part of that great ocean of immortality which we call spirit, or the great sea of glass before the footstool of Divinity.

Life does not end; the individual goes on. But as evolution teaches that the individual will some time break up into a solar system made of millions of parts, becoming the life and spirit of each of those parts, so it is taught that at the point of Nirvana the personality is broken up into millions of parts which become parts of the personality of all Nature but are still one in consciousness even as God is one, although there are millions of separate parts of Himself. At the point of Nirvana the spirit has reached the stage where it can be broken up and still remain one; as it is said, "Division may take place within such a spirit, but the spirit itself cannot be divided." This is the Nirvana of the East: that the individual shall become a part of all things, an urge to attainment within the soul of all things and an impulse within the nature of all things; a voice crying in the wilderness of the world, pleading within the natures of those still functioning within their lower bodies to join that stream of progress which, through the Middle Path, enters into the consciousness of one-ness by losing the concept of separateness.

Nirvana, the end of all beginnings, is that point where man is again one with Self, conscious with the consciousness of Self, and conscious over the area of Self.

Om Mani Padme Hum.

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